



U.S. Department of Justice

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Maryland Woman Pleads Guilty in Theft Of More Than \$450,000 From Employer - Clerk Created Files For Fake Real Estate Transactions -**

WASHINGTON - Anika Williams, 35, of Bowie, Md., has pled guilty to a federal charge of interstate transportation of stolen money stemming from the theft of more than \$450,000 from her employer, U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. announced today.

Williams entered the guilty plea on May 3, 2011, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. She is to be sentenced on July 26, 2011 by the Honorable Reggie B. Walton. She faces up to 10 years incarceration and a fine of up to \$250,000.

At the plea hearing, Williams admitted that, between July 2005 and February 2008, she stole \$455,548 from her employer, the now-defunct Paramount Title and Escrow Company. As the office manager of Paramount's office in the District of Columbia, Williams was responsible for handling matters before and after a real estate settlement occurred, and in particular, disbursing funds and recording documents and land records.

Williams used her position to defraud Paramount by creating "dummy" files for fake real estate transactions that appeared to be legitimate on the balance reports in Paramount's computer system. She transferred funds intended for use in legitimate real estate transactions to dummy real estate transactions. She then was able to steal money from both the dummy real estate transactions and legitimate real estate transactions by creating checks and initiating wire transactions that appeared to be legitimate on the balance reports -- but which were, in fact, unauthorized and fraudulent.

During the course of her scheme, Williams distributed the stolen funds, by checks and wire transactions, to herself; two companies that she formed, which actually performed some legitimate services for Paramount; her brother, who also worked for Paramount; her boyfriend, who worked for one of her companies, and a friend and former co-worker at Paramount.

Williams has agreed to pay \$455,548 in restitution to Paramount. The other three individuals accused of receiving stolen funds are awaiting court hearings.

This case was investigated by the Washington Field Office of the U.S. Secret Service and the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD).

In announcing the guilty plea, U.S. Attorney Machen praised the efforts of the Special Agent who worked on the case for the U.S. Secret Service and MPD Detective Richard Espinosa. He also commended the efforts of those who worked on the case from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia: Legal Assistant Latoya Wade, student Devron Elliott, and AUSA Frederick Yette, who handled the prosecution.

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